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ABSTRACT

This brief overview discusses the rationale for measuring teachers' attitudes toward the mainstreaming of handicapped students into regular classrooms, as well as research findings on teacher attitudes. Two attitude tests, Berryman and Berryman's Attitudes Toward Mainstreaming Scale and Hall's Stages of Concern Questionnaire, are also briefly described. The identification of teacher attitudes is important because of the effects of teachers' expectations on students, as well as the relevance of teacher attitudes for evaluating program effectiveness. Teacher attitudes, both toward handicapped students and toward mainstreaming, can be measured by rating scales, interval scales, rank order, Q sorts, semantic differential techniques, sociometric techniques, adjective checklists, questionnaires, and interviews. Research shows that many teachers express negative views about handicapped students and mainstreaming, especially for emotionally disturbed and mentally retarded students. Both support services and teacher education are associated with more positive teacher attitudes. (GDC)

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UPDATE

MEASURING TEACHER ATTITUDES TOWARD MAINSTREAMING

To provide equal access to education, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act requires the placement of handicapped students in the least restrictive environment that will promote their academic and social development. In response to this requirement, schools are mainstreaming handicapped students from segregated special education settings into regular classrooms. Because teachers play a crucial role in mainstreaming programs, knowledge of their attitudes is important. To assist in planning evaluation studies, this digest will focus on the reasons for evaluating teacher attitudes, the types of attitudes being measured, measurement techniques being used, and major findings in recent research.

WHY MEASURE TEACHER ATTITUDES TOWARD MAINSTREAMING?

Identifying teacher attitudes is important on two levels: the individual classroom level and the larger program level. On the classroom level, teacher attitudes affect their teaching and their students. Research shows that teachers' attitudes influence both their expectations for their students and their behavior toward them. These attitudes, expectations, and behaviors influence both student self-image and academic performance (Alexander). Negative teacher attitudes toward handicapped students are detrimental to the handicapped students mainstreamed into their classrooms (Hannah). On the program level, teacher attitudes provide important feedback for judging overall program effectiveness and for improving mainstreaming procedures.

In addition to attitude assessment, attitude measures can identify both teacher characteristics and program procedures which appear to affect teacher attitudes. Results can assist in improving program design and implementation, daily procedures, preservice and inservice teacher training, and support services.

Assessing teacher attitude changes over time helps to evaluate the effectiveness of experience, changes in training or procedures, or the general progress of program implementation.

WHAT KINDS OF TEACHER ATTITUDES ARE BEING MEASURED?

Two major types of teacher attitudes are being studied: attitudes toward handicapped students and attitudes toward mainstreaming.

Attitudes Toward the Handicapped

While teacher attitudes toward the disabled in general have been studied, educational research has focused more on identifying differences in attitudes toward different types of disabilities. Casey, for example, measured differences in attitudes toward physically handicapped, emotionally disturbed, mentally retarded, and speech impaired children. Evaluations can also focus on attitudes toward sensory disabilities, such as blindness and deafness.

Attitudes Toward Mainstreaming

Teacher attitudes can be the focus of mainstreaming evaluations or part of a larger program assessment. Studies can also look at the process of implementing mainstreaming programs and how the types of teacher attitudes reflect their stage in the implementation process.

Many different questions can be asked relating to teacher attitudes toward mainstreaming. Many studies have examined the cognitive and affective changes in teachers to evaluate inservice treatment effects. Others have looked at specific program effects, such as class size, class composition, or support services. The relationship of teacher characteristics (sex, knowledge of handicaps or mainstreaming, grade level taught, etc.) to teacher attitudes has also been studied.

HOW CAN TEACHER ATTITUDES BE MEASURED?

There are a variety of types of attitude measures which can be used to construct instruments to measure teacher attitudes. Descriptions and examples of the following types are discussed in the literature (Horne, Jones):

*Summated rating, or Likert-type scales.
*Equal-appearing interval scales.
*Rank order.
*Q Sorts.
*Semantic differential techniques.
*Sociometric procedures.
*Adjective checklists.
*Questionnaires.
*Interviews.

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Many measures of teacher attitudes toward mainstreaming have been developed to evaluate specific school programs. The methodology and validity of many studies have not been evaluated. The following measures are examples of instruments which may have more general applicability.

Attitude Toward Mainstreaming Scale.

Developed to establish a baseline of teacher attitudes toward mainstreaming and to monitor future attitudinal changes, this instrument measures three attitude factors: learning capability, general mainstreaming, and traditional limiting disabilities, and the effects of five variables: sex, teaching field, certification category, age, and teaching experience, and past experience with the handicapped (Berryman and Berryman). Validation studies support its applicability to studies assessing teacher attitudes toward mainstreaming and attitude change that are not disability specific (Berryman and Neal).

Stages of Concerns Questionnaire (SoCQ).

This instrument has been used to assess teacher attitudes to evaluate the progress of implementing mainstreaming programs. Based on a model of a progression of defined stages of concerns, or types of attitudes people have when involved in a process of adopting educational innovations, it identifies at which of the seven stages attitudes appear to be (Hall). It has been used in a study of Illinois elementary school teachers (Bosman) and a longitudinal study of Kansas teachers (Holloway).

WHAT ARE MAJOR FINDINGS ON TEACHERS ATTITUDES?

Most studies show that teachers, like the general public, have negative views of both handicapped students and mainstreaming. Teachers are most negative to mainstreaming emotionally disturbed and mentally retarded students (Alexander, Hannah). Lack of knowledge of disabilities, experience with handicapped students, and lack of training in teaching these types of students appear as major contributers of these attitudes. Preservice and inservice training has been effective in promoting positive attitudes and facilitating skill acquisition (Salend). Additionally, training should address the stages of concern of the teachers involved, their degree of actual experience with mainstreaming, to be most effective (Holloway).

Support services for teachers with mainstreamed classes appear vital to teacher attitudes. Having psychologists or special education teachers that can provide information and assistance on a specific handicapped child, behavior management, or teaching techniques, makes teachers more positive toward mainstreaming (Hannah, Horne).

Placing handicapped students in regular classrooms makes more demands on the time and talents of the classroom teacher. Assessing teacher attitudes is vital to providing them with the training and support services to enable them to meet the challenge successfully.

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